



[Patrice Lumumba, 1925 - 1961](#)

Patrice Lumumba

This third part of our African Revolutionary Writers' Series is dedicated to the "Uhuru Years" that followed the 1960 "Year of Africa", when sixteen countries took their independence. In this instalment we feature Patrice Lumumba's short, powerful, historic [Independence Day speech of 30 June 1960](#) (attached).

In the Western Imperialist literature the independence of all of these countries has been recorded as a "granting" (e.g. thus: "Congo was granted independence by Belgium"). The contradictory view of what happened during the greatest worldwide political change in the 20th Century - the National Democratic Revolutions in the former colonial countries - mirrors the theme of Frederick Douglass's most famous speech, (["If there is no Struggle, there is no Progress"](#)) where Douglass says that **"power concedes nothing without a demand"**.

Lumumba's speech is still famous for making the same point, and particularly because he made the speech in the presence of the monarch of the colonial power, King Baudouin of Belgium (grandson of the original colonist and butcher King Leopold). Baudouin had already spoken in a paternalistic and euphemistic manner at an earlier stage during the same event.

Lumumba at once spoke of struggle, and of victory, and he spoke frankly of the vicious colonialism which had been overcome by that struggle.

Congo at that time was on a par with South Africa as a wealthy, quickly-modernising African country. The subsequent history of the Congo has been a tragedy of neo-colonialism, including the martyrdom of Patrice Lumumba in the following year, 1961, and the imposition of the stooge dictator Mobutu who ruled until the 1990s.

It is absurd to suggest, as some Imperialist writers continue to do, that the neo-colonial reaction was Lumumba's fault for being cheeky in front of the Belgian king. No-one must be allowed to forget that these words of Lumumba's expressed the historical truth, as well as the feelings of millions of Africans at the time, and that these words needed to be said and had to be said, so that they can now be remembered and glorified again in the 21st Century while Africa gains its "second independence" born out of the struggle against neo-colonialism and Imperialism.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Patrice Lumumba, Congo Independence Day Speech, 30 June 1960.](#)
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